

Message Text

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SUBJ: DEVELOPMENTS RE BARDAI HOSTAGES

REF: A. NDJAMENA 1922; B. PARIS 23322

1. SINCE LATE JULY BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS FOR RELEASE OF MADAME CLAUSTRE, SITUATION HAS GOTTEN STICKIER AND FRENCH-CHADIAN RELATIONS HAVE DETERIORATED FURTHER. THE GOC REMAINS CONVINCED THAT MADAME CLAUSTRE'S HUSBAND PARTICIPATED IN DELIVERY OF ARMS TO REBELS AND CONTINUES TO DESCRIBE HIM AS A FRENCH FUNCTIONARY. MR. CLAUSTRE, MEANWHILE, HAS APPARENTLY ALSO BECOME A HOSTAGE AND HABRE HAS THREATNED TO KILL MADAME CLAUSTRE ON SEPTEMBER 23 UNLESS HIS DEMANDS ARE MET.

2. AS INDICATED IN REF B FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION IS AROUSED OVER ISSUE. ONE FRENCH CITIZEN RECENTLY RETURNED FROM FRANCE ADVISES EMBASSY THAT CLAUSTRE CASE IS COVERED DAILY ON TV AND RADIO PROGRAMS. IN FACE OF THESE PRESSURES FRENCH HAVE DESIGNATED A NEW NEGOTIATOR, RENE JOURNAIC, TECHNICAL COUNSELOR TO THE PRESIDENCY. HE MADE ONE QUICK TRIP TO NDJAMENA IN EARLY SEPTEMBER DURING WHICH GENERAL MALLOUM REFUSED TO RECEIVE HIM (THUS CAUSING EXTREME IRRITATION TO FRENCH ACCORDING FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCE), BUT HE RETURNED AND HAD A LONG MEETING WITH MALLOUM ON SEPTEMBER 10.

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3. CHADIANS, MEANWHILE, HAVE BEEN TRYING TO RESOLVE THE CLAUSTRE CASE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION", CALLING FOR THE "RETURN TO THE FOLD" OF THE NORTHERN REBELS. THEIR LATEST EFFORT WAS TO USE THE RECENTLY RETURNED DERDEI (NDJAMENA 2227) AS THEIR INSTRUMENT. DERDEI RECENTLY SPENT TWO WEEKS IN THE NORTH, INCLUDING BARDAI, AND MET ON SEPTEMBER 7 WITH THE "REBEL CHIEFTAINS". ACCORDING TO NDJAMENA DAILY NEWS SHEET, THE DERDEI SUPPORTS NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND HAS URGED REBELS TO RELEASE MADAME CLAUSTRE. DERDEI RETURNED TO NDJAMENA SEPTEMBER 10 BUT THE GENERAL OPINION HERE IS THAT HIS MISSION WAS A FAILURE.

4. FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCE SAID ON SEPTEMBER 13 THAT FRENCH RADIO IS NOW ANNOUNCING EVERY HOUR AN OFFER TO HABRE OF TEN MILLION FRENCH FRANCS (DOLS 2.3 MILLION) FOR THE RELEASE OF MADAME CLAUSTRE. ALTHOUGH FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCE STATED THAT THEIR PROPOSAL TO PAY RANSOM WAS MADE WITH THE PRIOR AGREEMENT OF GOC, FRENCH ANNOUNCEMENT WAS ATTACKED BY THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL IN A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED THAT DAY. COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT OFFER FOLLOWED A PRESS CAMPAIGN "SAVAGELY ORCHESTRATED AGAINST CHAD" AND CONCLUDED WITH STATEMENT THAT GOC "DENOUNCES BEFORE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL OPINION THE AGREEMENT REACHED BY HABRE AND HIS FRENCH ACCOMPLICES". REVISED AND EXTENDED COMMUNIQUE PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 15 REFERRED TO A "FRENCH PRESS CAMPAIGN", ADDING THAT GOF OFFER RESULTED FROM "PRESSURE OF OUR ETERNAL ENEMIES WHO HAVE SWORN TO MAKE A PRIVATE PRESERVE OF OUR COUNTRY".

5. THERE THUS APPEARS TO BE AN IMPASSE BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND CHADIANS WITH THE SEPTEMBER 23 DEADLINE ONE WEEK AWAY. FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCE STATED THAT THE TEN MILLION FRANCS RANSOM WAS THEIR LAST OFFER TO OBTAIN MADAME CLAUSTRE'S RELEASE AND THE CHADIANS SEEM NOT DISPOSED TO DO MORE THAN THEY HAVE DONE TO DATE.
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